

Practice Note: Staying Close In

Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdal on January 25, 2012

I want to say a few words about meditation practice to give you a little something to work with over the course of the morning. The Buddha used a variety of images for meditation practice that give the feeling of being comfortably or refreshingly enwrapped: intimate, close, cozy. One image is that of a completely clean, pure white cotton blanket that you wrap around yourself for meditation. No part of the body is untouched by this beautiful, clean cotton blanket. And even if you are not actually wrapped up by this clean blanket, the idea in your awareness is one of being contained or close in in a very nice way. It may be as though in a storm, you are in a cabin where it's safe, comfortable, and warm. You feel here in a complete way. Wrapping yourself in this blanket helps you to feel that you are here: safe, settled, cozy, intimate, close in. "Close in" is the expression I like.

Sometimes people speak about having a meditation 'bubble' they sit inside. Even when they are walking, they stay in the bubble. This means that they don't let their mind, thoughts, and concerns wander far away. They don't go to the future or the past, or to what may be happening thirty feet away. They stay connected with their eyes and ears just to what is happening here close in. They stay close and cozy.

I know that sometimes it is far from cozy to sit in meditation. There might be all kinds of strong feelings, emotions, or body sensations coming up. In those times, it is particularly useful to stay close in, as if you are wrapped in a blanket and comfortably held. Just stay close to those sensations, which may be uncomfortable, as opposed to recoiling from them or ricocheting off them. Stay close in.

If this makes some sense for you this morning, try and stay close. Stay close in to yourself, or in your bubble, or in your blanket so that you can really feel that you are here. Settling in, settling in, settling into this body, into this mind, into this heart. Just settle in to being here, close in. No need to think about other times or other places. Just here.